



The BEACON

The Official Newsletter of Christ Church United Church of Christ, Des Plaines, Illinois
An Open & Affirming WISE for mental health congregation

Volume III, Issue 3

March 2026

From The Pastor's Desk: Honoring the Women Who Have Shaped Us

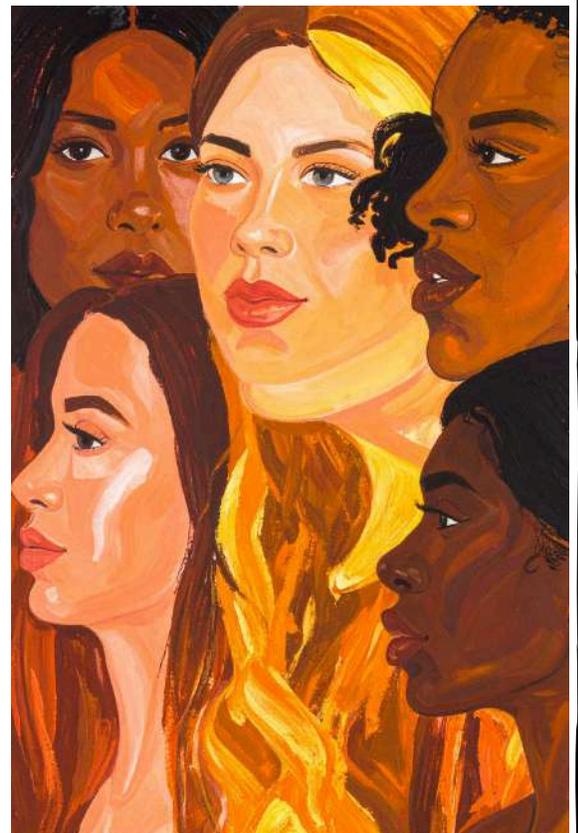
Dear Friends,

March brings us Women's History Month, a time to remember not just the women in textbooks and movements, but also those whose quiet, steady presence has shaped our lives.

When I think about the women who shaped me, I start with my birth-great-grandmother. She was the first protector I can remember having—there was no place she was not, no corner of my life where her presence was absent. Even as an adult, after reuniting with my birth family, people in town still seemed to know that if they saw her, I would be there too. I cherished the quiet moments sitting with her in our tiny living room, listening to thunderstorms rumble across the sky, or watching her on the porch as I ran about the yard and climbed trees. I remember when we went to bed: I would turn on the light, grab my St. Martin de Porres glow-in-the-dark figure, jump onto our high bed, and hold the figurine close to the light. After a few moments, I would carefully return it to the dresser as she turned off the light, watching it glow in the dark while I lay by the window, feeling the evening breeze drift into the room. Those nights were simple, sacred, and full of the quiet assurance of her presence.

I also think of my mother, her sacrifices, her protective love, and her determination to give her children what she may not have had. Though she was my adoptive mother, she always reassured me that she loved me as if I were of her own flesh and blood. She was strict, but her love never wavered, lasting until the very end when she worried about our future. I remember telling her she had done her best, and it was time for her to rest. So much of who we are comes from women who never give up.

Scripture also tells us about women whose stories are more complex than the Church has sometimes shown. I think of Hagar. In Genesis 16 and 21, she is used, cast out, and sent into the wilderness with her child by Abraham and Sarah. She has no power, no status, and no protection. Yet in the wilderness, God sees her. Hagar is the only person in Scripture to give God a name: El Roi, meaning “the God who sees me.”

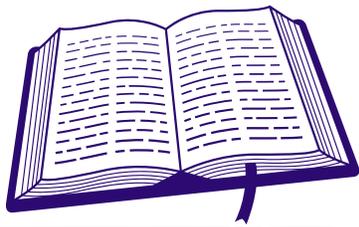


Genesis 16:13 tells us: “So she named the Lord who spoke to her, ‘You are the God who sees me.’”

Continued on page 10.

Nourishment Through Scripture

For those who are following the Scripture lessons used during the Sunday Worship Services, here are the Common Lectionary readings:



March 1: James 1:19–27; Luke 6:17-36;
March 8: Numbers 27:1–1; Matthew 15:21–28;
March 15: Ezekiel 34:1–10; John 10:1–18;
March 22: Titus 3:1–8; Mark 12:13–17;
March 29: Galatians 6:1–16; Matthew 21:1–17;

Pastor's Office Hours:

Sundays: By Appt after worship.

Mondays: Phone, Video, or Appt.

Tuesdays & Wednesdays: 10 am - 3 pm*

Thursdays: By Appt.

Sabbath: Fridays and Saturdays

Administrative Assistant's Hours: T - F 9 am - 3 pm

Finance Coordinator's Hours: T - TH 9 am - 12 pm

Staff Meeting: Tuesdays 9:30 am - 11:00 am

The office phone is not answered.



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<https://bit.ly/CCUCCAPP>



COMMUNITY BACKPACK PROJECT

Suggested items - please, no peanut based snacks and no glass jars!

- Single-serve breakfast cereal
- Instant oatmeal packets
- Pancake mix (add water variety)
- Canned red beans
- One-pound bags of rice
- Pasta and pasta sauce (in cans or plastic jars)



- Canned tuna, beef or chicken
- Peanut butter and jelly (in plastic jars)
- Fruit cups, pudding cups, fruit snacks
- Individually wrapped snacks and chips
- Canned pasta (ravioli, beef-a-Roni, stew, or chili)
- Canned soup

Giving

Did you know our church offers online giving and text-to-give? They're easy to use and secure! You can give a gift of support online at <https://bit.ly/ChristChurchUCCGive> or give via text message by texting the amount you would like to give to 847-750-3007.



Kindness is free.

Let's sprinkle that stuff everywhere!



Potluck: Come and bring a dish for the potluck dinner. The dinner will be at 6:00 pm on **Wednesday, March 11th, 2025**. Join us for fellowship and great food!

SUNDAY CHURCH MINISTRIES

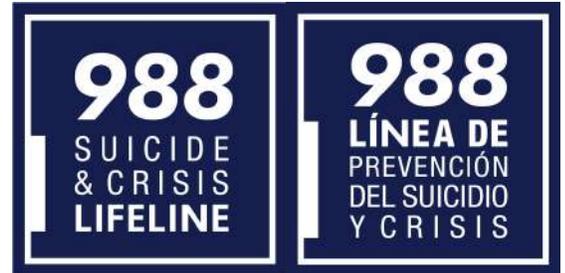
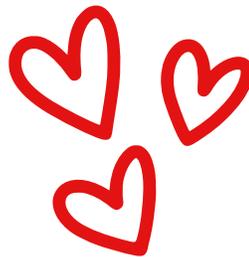
	<u>Liturgist/Lector</u>	<u>Council Greeter</u>	<u>Streaming Coordinator</u>
March 1	Putz-Cheng Family	Judy Rosedale	Mandy O'Donnell
March 8	Kyle Speer	Bob Neil	Judy Rosedale
March 15	Jessica Busse	Mandy O'Donnell	Mandy O'Donnell
March 22	Megan Shipp	Laura Hallberg	Judy Rosedale
March 29 <i>(Palm Sunday)</i>	Jacob Guerra-Martinez	Megan Shipp	Mandy O'Donnell



Ushers

- March 1** Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
- March 8** Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
- March 15** Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
- March 22** Rita Barth, Gary Smith, Cathy Wiesner, Ruben Oviedo
- March 29** Donna Boyko, Alice Barnhart, Jan Storm, Julie Radman, Carolyn Amick
(Palm Sunday)

**FEBRUARY'S AVERAGE
SUNDAY ATTENDANCE:
53±**



INCOME REPORT:

Funds Overview for February 2026:

- Contributions (70) - \$10,496.71
- Special Services (Funerals, Memorials, etc) (1) - \$600.00
- Mission (7) - \$287.80
- Lenten Offering (2) - \$116.00
- Book Study (1) - \$17.99
- Rent (1) - \$1,000.00
- Pastor's Discretionary (1) - \$25.00



I ask for your patience as we navigate transitions within our fiscal system. -GM

Lets Get Involved!



GET IT TOGETHER: Tiny Toes & Big Hearts! Our Get It Together group crafted blankets, hats & booties for Project Baby Blanket! They'll bring a little love to NICU babies. Can you crochet or knit? Consider joining our group! The group meets on the third Wednesday of each month in the lounge. *The next meeting will be on March 18th, from 10:00 am - 12:00 pm.*

NOTABLES: The Notables will meet again to prepare for the coming busy season. As always, in Wobbe Hall from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm. Contact Kyle Speer for more details.



MISSION COMMITTEE: On the first Sunday of every month, we collect food for the Self-Help Closet and Pantry of Des Plaines. The Red Barrels will be in the narthex.

Please, no expired food; here are a few suggestions:

- Ketchup
- Mustard
- Mayonnaise
- Pasta sauce (plain)
- Flour
- Sugar
- Instant coffee
- Juice (large bottles or boxed)
- Breakfast cereal (chocolate if possible)
- New or like-new clean bed linens and towels
- Body wash
- Shampoo
- Dish soap
- Laundry detergent
- Paper towels
- Dog food (canned and dry)
- Cooking oil
- Men's, Women's, and children's all-sizes underwear
- Ensure, Boost, Glucerna (generic ok)
- Canned dinners (hash, chili)
- Canned fruit
- Peanut butter
- Jelly or jam



Please bring clean, dry plastic grocery bags. Thank you everyone for all your help.

Men's Lunch:

Next meeting is on Monday, **March 9th** at **11:45 AM.**

Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60018



Women's Breakfast:

Next meeting is on Tuesday, **March 10th** at **9 AM.**

Sunrise Grill: 1930 E Touhy Ave, Des Plaines, IL 60018

LIBRARY



NEW BOOKS IN THE LITTLE LIBRARY!

Looking for a good read? Thanks to our dedicated Faith Forward Commission, our Little Library is stocked with various books for all ages. Each book has been carefully selected and stamped with our library stamp.

Want to contribute? Please hand your book donations to a Commission member. Remember, only pre-approved books will be stamped.

CHRIST CHURCH COUNCIL JANUARY 14, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order: 7:00 pm

Roll Call: Judy Rosedale, Bob Neil, Mandy O'Donnell, Holly Schmidt, Laura Hallberg, Pastor Gilbert
Prayer

Review of November 12, 2025 Council Minutes:

Motioned, seconded, motion passed.

**There was no council meeting in December.*

Review of Financial Report: Not available.

Officer Reports – none

PASTOR'S REPORT

(NOVEMBER 5 - DECEMBER 4)

Worship & Arts:

- Purchased and decorated the altar area with new decor for All Saints Day
- Regular Worship services – 3
 - Thanksgiving Service w/Communion

Faith Forward Commission | Christian Education:

- FF Adventures are held every week during Advent
- Advent Season, four-week study of "The Angels of Christmas: Hearing God's Voice in Advent."
- November 19-December 3

Pastoral Care:

- Pastoral contact (pastoral care-related calls/texts, emails, in-person visits, greeting cards) = 35+
 - Including one hospital visit with anointing
- Center of Concern - Adopt an older adult for Christmas \$103.75 (Discretionary)

Administrative/Personal:

- Staff Meeting – Seven (7)
- Continue to co-manage all social media. Updated website
- Two committee meeting(s)
- The Vision Task Force has taken a slower pace due to the holidays
- The transition to our outsourced bookkeeper is ongoing. We should receive some reports later this month.
- The staff had an outing for Thanksgiving lunch.
- Big Noise Theatre is using our space for the next couple of months. Meeting on Sundays/Weds
- New administrative assistant is coming up to the 90-day review.
- Finalizing the job description and responsibilities for new Music Director. Candidate would take significant pay cut to step into this role with us, speaking to their sense of calling and commitment to the ministry.

Wider UCC & DP Community Meetings/Presentations/Events:

- Meeting with St. Paul UCC - Palatine lay leaders & pastor
- Clergy Alliance meeting - 1
- Thanksgiving Ecumenical Service - Clergy Alliance
- Illinois Conference of the UCC Meetings - 1
- Attended Proclamation in honor of Jessie Maag held by Cook County Commissioner Kevin Morrison at City Hall
- Camino Rising held its first health fair and pantry distribution
- Camino Rising welcomed Mandy O'Donnell as the newest board member and official Christ Church UCC representative.

PASTOR'S REPORT*(DECEMBER 5 - JANUARY 11)***Worship & Arts:**

- Advent decorations were taken down.
- Worship services – Six (6)
 - One (1) w/Communion

Faith Forward Commission | Christian Education:

- FF Adventures were held every week during Advent.
- Inter-generational Pageant
- Two Advent book study sessions with attendees from St. Peter's UCC - Skokie.

Pastoral Care:

- Pastoral contact (pastoral care-related calls/texts, emails, in-person visits, greeting cards) = 152±
 - Including one hospital visit with anointing.
- Memorial Service for George Bielat.

Discretionary Expenses

- Forest Elementary - Holiday Shop Donation (allows kids to purchase gifts) - \$35
- Gifts cards for a family - \$225.90
- Gifts for family of two - \$102.49
- ComEd bill paid for family - \$419.66

Administrative:

- Staff Meetings – Five (5)
- Continue to co-manage all social media and update the website.
- The transition to our outsourced bookkeeper is ongoing.
- The staff had an outing for Christmas lunch.

Personnel:

- Our new administrative assistant will have her 90-day review next week.
- Our new music director and church organist should start on Sunday, January 18

Wider UCC & DP Community Meetings/Presentations/Events:

- Clergy Alliance meetings - One (1)
- Blue Christmas Ecumenical Service - Clergy Alliance
- Attended St. Martin's Episcopal Church's last service during vacation.
- Illinois Conference of the UCC Board of Directors - One (1)
- Camino Rising held a pantry distribution.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee: No meeting in December, but the committee welcomed John LaMarche as the newest member, who will serve as the approver in the new fiscal system, working in conjunction with the outsourced bookkeeping company, Church Training Center. No updates for January.

Outreach Committee: Busy with the 4th Annual Sing-Along on December 5th. Joined by many in the area to usher in the holiday season with songs and cookies. Over 100 people were in attendance. They also promoted the Empty Bowls December event at Oakton College. The event supports local food pantries during this critical time and demonstrates our church's involvement in our community.

Faith Forward Committee: No meeting in November, but we're prepping for the pageant on 12/14. FFC hosted a fellowship hour after the service that day. Santa and Mrs. Claus visited in December.

ONA Wise Committee: There was a meeting in November. The group is looking for different speakers from AA, grief, etc. They will also be trying to get more members. No updates for January

Missions: 332 cupcakes were delivered to San Lucas for their Thanksgiving dinner, feeding needy families in the Humboldt Park area. We had Mission's Christmas Tree decorated with 26 tags for San Lucas children. Gifts were to be returned by Sunday, December 21. 26 gifts were delivered to San Lucas for their celebration of the Feast of the Three Kings. The celebration takes place on Jan 4. The homeless are having struggles because of the weather, but they still receive a meal every Tuesday at San Lucas. There is also a concern about ICE in the area.

Unfinished Business: Vision Task Force - no update (no meeting in December)

New Business:

- **Joint Workshop: Council & Finance-Trust** - a Saturday morning for about 4 hours to discuss various items and make sure everyone is on the same page with things.
- **Personnel Updates**
 - Pastor's Annual Review - The pastor received an excellent overall rating. Motion for a 3% raise, seconded, motion passed.
 - Music Director & Church Organist - Karen has started and will work on starting a choir back up
- **Filling Vacant Council Seat** - make announcement during Sunday service for anyone interested in being a candidate for council, to let Judy or Laura know
- **Potluck Hosts**
- **Council Prayer**
- **Pastor's Committee Meetings Commitment:** Pastor Gilbert is no longer required to attend all committee meetings, except for Finance and Council, where attendance remains mandatory. Any absence from these meetings must be communicated in advance.
 - The motion was made, seconded, and passed.
- It is moved that Council meetings will be skipped in July going forward.
 - The motion was made, seconded, and passed.

IMPORTANT POSTMARK CHANGES

What Vote by Mail Voters Need to Know



Mail Postmark Rules Have Changed

Previously: Mail was postmarked the day you mailed it

Now: Mail is postmarked **the day it is processed** which can result in **at least a 1-2 day delay**

VOTE BY MAIL BALLOTS

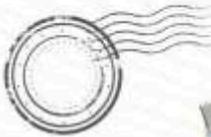
Must be Postmarked by Election Day to be Counted

A late postmark will **NOT** be counted



Mailing Your Ballot Close to Election Day?

If you are returning your ballot within a week of or on Election Day:



Go to the post office counter & request a **manual postmark**



Use a **secure drop box** (if available)



Deliver your ballot directly to your **election authority's office**

DON'T RISK A LATE POSTMARK

Take one extra step to make sure **YOUR VOTE COUNTS!**

Check with your election authority for drop box locations and office hours



Primary Election Tuesday, March 17th

Get ready to vote! Learn your registration status, find your polling place, find your early voting site, and learn who your elected officials are: www.cookcountyclerkil.gov/elections/your-voter-information



Des Plaines Public Library is a Drop Box Location



In February, we welcomed Helayne as our new Finance Coordinator, as well as new members, Caryn, Brandon and Laura!

1 - Aimee Martinez 9 - Kyle Speer
 5 - Cathy Chappell 14 - Barbara Nix
 8 - Laura Hallberg 27 - Frank Staggs
 9 - Mike Harkovich 31 - Maggie LaMarche

Happy
Anniversary

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

22 - Larry and Dorothy Zemke (56)

Continued from page 1.

In a world that discarded her, God saw her. I also think of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her courage, faith, and devotion are remarkable. She accepted a calling that was both miraculous and risky, trusting God even when others might have judged her. Mary shows the steadfastness and love we see in mothers and grandmothers through the generations. She reminds us that women carry God's work and hope with strength and humility.

I think of Mary Magdalene, too. For centuries, she has been given a reputation that Scripture never gave her. The text does not call her immoral. It tells us she was healed, followed Jesus faithfully, stood near the cross when many fled, and was the first to witness the resurrection. Yet tradition often turned her into a cautionary tale rather than honoring her as an Apostle to the Apostles. While Scripture does not name her in the story of the woman accused, I remember how Jesus refused to let a woman be publicly shamed and executed. In the Gospel of John 8:7, Jesus says, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." He interrupts systems that weaponize morality against women.

The Church Universal has not always fully lifted up women. The Catholic Church continues to bar women from its highest ordained offices. Many Protestant traditions, while ordaining women, often fail to honor figures like Mary, the mother of Jesus, or Mary Magdalene as deeply as they deserve. Too often, women in Scripture are reduced to warnings instead of witnesses, temptations instead of theologians, footnotes instead of foundations.

But imagine if we told the truth about them. Imagine if Hagar were preached as the theologian who named God. Imagine if Mary, the mother of Jesus, were consistently honored as a model of faith, courage, and maternal love. Imagine if Mary Magdalene were recognized as the first preacher of resurrection. Imagine if women were not moral object lessons but moral leaders. Perhaps when we lift women up, not just in part or as symbols, but fully, the world itself begins to soften. It becomes warmer, more just, and more like the God who sees.

This month, I give thanks for my great-grandmother. For my mother. For Hagar in the wilderness. For Mary at the annunciation and at the cross. For Mary Magdalene at the tomb. For every woman who has endured systems not built for her and still found a way to rise.

May we become a Church that does not merely celebrate women one month a year, but embodies the Gospel that dignifies them every day.

And may we remember the promise of Galatians 3:28:

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

May we live as if that were true.

Peace,

Rev. Gilbert

COMING UP IN FEBRUARY

Date	Event	Where	Time
2	Outreach Meeting	Lounge	5:15 PM
5	Lenten Book Study Ch. 4	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
9	Men's Lunch	Sunrise Grill	11:45 AM
9	LGBTQIA+ Cookies & Conversations	Oakton	12:30 PM
10	Women's Breakfast	Sunrise Grill	9 AM
10	Camino Rising Open Operating Hours	Wobbe Hall	3 - 7 PM
11	OFFICE OPENS AT 2 PM		
11	Potluck	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
11	Council Meeting	Lounge	7 PM
12	Lenten Book Study Ch. 5	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
13	Concert by Organist Paul Fey	Glenview Community Church	7 PM
15	ONA-WISE Committee Meeting	Lounge	10:45 AM
18	Get It Together	Lounge	10 AM
19	Lenten Book Study Ch. 6	Wobbe Hall	6 PM
23	Faith Forward Commission Meeting	Lounge	5:15 PM
24	Camino Rising Open Operating Hours	Wobbe Hall	3 - 7 PM
29	Palm Sunday Service	Sanctuary	9:30 AM
29	Finance Committee Meeting	Lounge	11 AM
4/2	Maundy Thursday Service	Wobbe Hall	7 PM
4/3	Good Friday Service	Sanctuary	7 PM

Memorials/Honors for February

In loving memory of my mom on the anniversary (2/16) of her passing. -Rev. Gilbert

Happy anniversary (2/16) to my supportive spouse, Jacob! Love, Gilbert.

Happy birthday to our son, Ace, 2/2! From Daddy & Papa.

Happy heavenly birthday to my mom & our grandma, Amy, 2/6!

Your son, Gilbert, grandkids, Jazmyn, Alexa, & Ace.

"Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul." - 3 John 1:2

Please keep the church office informed when you hear of someone needing prayers. During the previous month, our thoughts and prayers were with:

Marion Meseth*
Dawn Mashek
Linda Steckel*
Jack Storm
Sue Prunty
Marilyn Hoover*
John Prellberg
Ariana Subera
Eppely Family

Marilyn McCown
Dorothy Zemke*
Kelly Roberts
Helen Harney
Hope & Bruce Tschappat*
Caid Carter
Cathy Eppely
Charles Eppely
Grace Pastor

Alice Barnhart
Bielat Family
Cathy Wiesner
Our Country
Ukraine, Lebanon, Palestinian,
and Israeli citizens
Documented & Undocumented
Immigrants

Homebound*



**Christ Church
United Church of Christ**

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Rev. Gilbert Martinez.....Pastor
Kat Chwalisz.....Administrative Assistant
Helayne Levin.....Finance Coordinator
Karen Wilberg.....Music Director
Tommie Jordan.....Custodian
Emanuel Alvarez.....Maintenance
Technician

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